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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT AU PRINCE 000737

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/19/2018

TAGS: PGOV PREL HA

SUBJECT: ERICQ PIERRE SAYS CORRUPTION BEHIND CHAMBER OF
DEPUTIES' VOTE AGAINST HIM

REF: PORT AU PRINCE 00701

PORT AU PR 00000737 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Ambassador Janet Sanderson. Reason: E.O. 12958 1.4 (b)
, (d)

Summary

¶1. (SBU) Ex-Prime Minister Designate Ericq Pierre declared publicly May 15 that he had run up against demands for cash, ministerial positions, and pork barrel projects in exchange for parliamentary support for his confirmation. He implied that his refusal to entertain these demands, as well as less than adequate support from President Preval, led to his rejection by the Chamber of Deputies. Pierre also outlined what his government policy would have been in a way to spotlight the contrast with caretaker-PM Alexis and President Preval. Pierre's indictment of the faults of Haiti's political class only highlighted his outsider status among that class he sought to lead. End summary.

Pierre Affirms He's a Haitian Citizen

¶2. (U) In a May 15 press statement laced with criticism of the Haitian political class, Ericq Pierre gave his version of what had transpired prior to the Chamber of Deputies' May 12 vote to reject him as the President's nominee for Prime Minister. Pierre ridiculed the pretext used against his eligibility, that his legal name and Haitian nationality were in doubt. He was a Haitian citizen and had never renounced his nationality. (Note: Eligibility conditions the constitution prescribes for the PM. End note.) His legal name of "Pierre Ericq Pierre" appeared on all his citizenship documents. He had never sought or applied for residence in a foreign country.

Says He was Victim of Corruption

¶3. (U) Pierre's most potent allegation was that he had confronted parliamentary corruption from the outset of his confirmation process. Various "emissaries" had come forward

demanding for their patrons cabinet positions, government projects in deputies' districts to help in re-election, and envelopes of cash. He had refused to entertain these or any demands that would obligate public resources before he became Prime Minister. Many of these demands had come from persons, he said, "masquerading as anti-neoliberals."

¶4. (U) Amplifying the charge of corruption, and implying a critical distance between himself and the former PM and the President, Pierre declared that had he been confirmed, he would have run a government based on complete transparency. His communication policy would have been based on the "imperative of truth." He would have "explained, explained, and explained again" his policies to the parliament and the public, and had his ministers do the same. The implementation of government projects would be held to a strict publicized schedule. Any delay in that schedule would have been explained publicly. Averring that he would have reinforced "morals" in public life, Pierre said his government would have strictly enforced the recently passed asset disclosure law for public officials, including parliamentarians. He claimed he would have suppressed abuses such as "political blackmail, bribery, special privileges, influence-peddling, and sexual harassment."

Claims Preval Did Not Support Him

¶5. (U) Pierre cast doubt on the support he had received from President Preval. He recounted that he had met with members of the Concertation of Progressive Parliamentarians (CPP) (Note: An ad hoc group of 51 deputies from various parties that voted as a bloc against Pierre. End note.) at the request of caretaker-PM Alexis and President Preval, and

POR TA PR 00000737 002.2 OF 002

had come away from that encounter convinced these deputies would not support him. Only the acting PM or the President could have changed these deputies' opinions, which had not occurred. Pierre said he could "only speculate" as to what had happened on that score.

Outlines What His Government Would Have Done

¶6. (U) As Prime Minister, Pierre said he would have fought against the high cost of living; created jobs and stimulated domestic production of goods and services; stimulated agricultural production and protected the environment; modernized the state; improved health and education; and brought about a functional justice system and fought crime. Reacting to a criticism leveled repeatedly at the Alexis government, Pierre said he would have sped up execution of government-funded programs and evaluated ministers' performance on that criterion. He noted it was ironic that Haiti requested additional international assistance every day of the week while the Haitian government was unable to apply resources already at its disposal within a reasonable time frame. A Pierre government would have deepened ties with the Dominican Republic and laid down a road map for better cooperation with MINUSTAH.

Comment

¶7. (SBU) Pierre's carefully couched presentation was a tour de force against some of the engrained habits of the Haitian political class: lack of government transparency, failure to communicate policies to the public (a fault of Alexis and especially Preval), slow project implementation (a notorious failing of the Ministry of Public Works), corruption as a way of life, and putting personal interests above the national interest. However, presented after losing his confirmation bid, the announcement of his government's program and the promise to bring morals into public life made the impression of a swan song.

¶8. (C) Pierre's case was not helped by his reputation of being out of touch with Haiti's political life after living abroad for many years. Nor did he receive sufficient support from President Preval, who displayed again his signature unwillingness to engage directly with legislators, for whom he harbors a disdain often deserved, but always politically counterproductive. He negotiated repeatedly with party leaders and with the Presidents of both Chambers, but never reached out to Senators and deputies. Haitian political party discipline being weak to non-existent, party leaders were never in a position to deliver their deputies. In his May 18 Flag Day speech, President Preval thanked Pierre for his effort, but appeared to squelch speculation that he would re-nominate him.

SANDERSON